



# NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & SENIOR SERVICES

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Commissioner

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## PUBLIC HEALTH BULLETIN

### **LEAD-BASED PAINT HAZARDS IN NJ PLAYGROUNDS**

On October 1, 1996, both the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) issued new guidance and an alert, respectively, concerning hazards to children from lead-based paint on playground equipment and in soil. This Bulletin summarizes the important findings and recommendations contained in the aforementioned guidance and alert documents.

Both the CPSC and EPA tested playground equipment and/or soil at select facilities around the country and found lead-based paint in various states of condition. In 1978, the CPSC banned the sale of lead paint containing more than 0.06% lead by weight intended for consumer use. The CPSC is currently using the 0.5% lead by weight level, consistent with EPA and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), in making decisions on controlling the most significant lead paint hazards.

Lead poisoning is one of the most common environmental health problems for children today. It is especially dangerous to children six years of age or younger and can result in reduced attention span, behavioral problems, reduced IQ, learning disabilities, hearing problems and slowed growth. Outside play areas may contain equipment with chipping or peeling lead-based paint, which along with soil, may be ingested by children putting their hands in their mouths. Neither the CPSC or EPA have specific data documenting any cases of poisoning associated with lead-based paint in playgrounds. They state that risks from deteriorating paint would be similar to lead-based paint on the exterior of residential structures. The risk to children would be negligible as long as the paint is intact.

The New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services (NJDHSS) recommends that local authorities obtain the CPSC "Staff Recommendations for Identifying & Controlling Lead Paint in Public Playground Equipment", the EPA Addendum "Guidance on Lead-based Paint, Lead-Contaminated Dust & Lead-Contaminated Soil" and follow the guidance provided in addressing lead hazards in playgrounds. This includes conducting an assessment of playground equipment considering: condition of the paint, age, use & maintenance. Equipment paint which is cracking, peeling or chalking should be prioritized for inspection and sampling. Paint and soil samples should be analyzed by an EPA accredited laboratory. Deteriorated paint with a lead content at or above 0.5% should be removed by a NJ certified Lead Abatement Contractor in accordance with NJ Department of Community Affairs regulations, or the equipment replaced. Equipment with intact lead-based paint does not require immediate replacement or removal, but should be maintained and monitored to ensure a non-hazardous condition. Playground soil should be tested for lead when paint on the equipment is deteriorating or there is evidence that the soil lead level may be elevated (e.g., urban areas, local industrial sources, other area tests, elevated blood-lead levels). EPA guidance, published on Sept. 11, 1995, provides protocols for soil sampling and recommends response actions appropriate for varying levels of contamination. If levels of lead in soil are elevated (400-5000ppm), interim controls such as placement of mulch, wood chips, sand or gravel around the equipment should be done. All interim measures require maintenance and monitoring to ensure effectiveness. Relocation of play equipment is an option and long-term measures may include soil abatement.

For more information, call CPSC at 800-638-2772 or EPA at 202-260-3779. For other questions, call New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services - Consumer and Environmental Health Services at 609-984-2193 or the Child and Adolescent Health Program at 609-292-5666.